



# Press Release



**Congressman John Conyers, Jr.  
Michigan, 14<sup>th</sup> District**

**Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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## **Conyers Calls For Fair and Reasonable Drug Sentencing Policies**

Representative John Conyers, Jr., (D-MI) House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member, issued the following statement at today's Public Safety, Sentencing and Incarceration Reform Caucus briefing:

"The most recent casualties in the *War on Drugs* are women subject to misguided sentencing policy for acting as low level drug offenders. These casualties are referred to as the *Girlfriend Problem*. Many women are becoming implicated in drug trafficking operations because their boyfriends and husbands are high-level drug offenders. Our prison population now tops 2 million, which means 1 in 142 US residents are now in prison. The female population has increased rapidly with 101,000 women in state or federal custody last year, a 50% increase from 1995.

Irrational and unjust sentencing policies explain the increase in the women's prison population. In too many cases, a woman is punished for the act of remaining with a boyfriend or husband engaged in drug activity, who is typically the father of her children. Under current law, even the least involved people in drug operations are held liable for the entire quantity of drugs found in connection with the conspiracy.

We need rational sentencing policy that encompasses such measures as fair and equitable sentencing, treatment instead of incarceration, drug courts, reentry programs, and restored judicial discretion. For this reason, I founded the Sentencing, Incarceration, and Public Safety Caucus. The Caucus provides a forum in which viable sentencing policy can be discussed and strategies for implementation can be identified. I am also preparing to reintroduce reentry legislation that will assist the more than 600,000 people leaving prison each year – many of them now women. This bill will provide state and local governments with grants for reentry programs, give employers incentives for hiring ex-felons, and repeal prohibitions on student loans for drug offenders."

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